

GOLDEN
THOUGHTS
OF
CARMEN SYLVA

PT

1858
E4P42
1910

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GOLDEN THOUGHTS
OF CARMEN SYLVA
QUEEN OF ROUMANIA



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GOLDEN THOUGHTS
OF CARMEN SYLVA
QUEEN OF ROUMANIA

TRANSLATED BY PERMISSION
BY H. SUTHERLAND EDWARDS

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GIFT

Parsons

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PREFACE



ON taking up a new volume of "Thoughts," the first impulse of an English reader is to consider in what degree they resemble the "Maxims" of La Rochefoucauld; of which no less than thirteen different English translations have appeared during the last thirty years. A friend of mine at once declares Carmen Sylva's little volume to be superior to the work of the French cynic; who is not, however, so cynical as is commonly supposed. For some, indeed, he is not cynical enough; and one of Carmen Sylva's subjects—Mr. J. A. Cantacuzène—has pointed out in some Notes to a portion of the "Parerga" of Schopenhauer, that in quoting some of the best known of La Rochefoucauld's sayings the philosopher of pessimism leaves out the modifying expressions, and thus makes the French wit—who often seems only to have

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wished to astonish and amuse—appear more cynical than he really is.

I am reminded by a "Thought" in the very volume I have been translating, that "Comparisons spoil impressions." Anyone, however, who likes to make the experiment may satisfy himself as to the moral superiority of "The Thoughts of a Queen" to "The Maxims" of La Rochefoucauld by giving both books to any candid, simple-minded person, and observing the effect produced. I once found a somewhat ingenuous young lady reading a yellow-covered book, which was evidently causing her much irritation.

"I have been reading that horrid Frenchman," she said, in explanation. "You do not mean to say," I replied, "that anyone has given you a book of Zola's?" "Not at all," she continued; "I meant La Rochefoucauld."

There is certainly no reader, man or woman, young or old, who could find anything to irritate in the "Thoughts," severe enough at times, of Carmen Sylva; and, apart from every other question, it will be obvious to all readers that the Roumanian Queen covers more, and often higher ground, and ground more poetical and

more picturesque than the French Aristocrat and Wit. The Duke De La Rochefoucauld is known to have been personally one of the most amiable, kind-hearted of men ; nor, fairly considered, is there anything very cynical in even the most cynical-looking of his "Maxims."

His qualifying expressions, however, pass unobserved, or are quietly passed over ; and if this fault is committed by such a thinker and such a writer as Schopenhauer, readers in general may certainly be excused when they go on repeating as sayings of La Rochefoucauld that "There is something in the misfortunes of our best friends which is agreeable to us," and with equal accuracy, that "Gratitude is a lively sense of favours to come."

"There is one love, but there are a thousand imitations," is a maxim of La Rochefoucauld, the reverse of cynical ; for which reason, no doubt, it is scarcely ever quoted. Neither is the perhaps less familiar maxim, that it is "More disgraceful to mistrust our friends than to be deceived by them" ; which is quite optimistic in its warm-hearted philosophy.

Whether the title "*Les Pensées d'une Reine*" originated with Carmen Sylva herself, or, as

seems probable, was suggested by M. Louis Ulbach—who transcribed these thoughts from the Queen's album, and published them by Her Majesty's permission in the volume now translated into English—I cannot say. Some of them, apart from the question of their poetical and philosophical merit, possess special interest as coming from a Queen in her character as such : they paint the exceptional position in which a sovereign, surrounded by a court, is placed. Only to a crowned head could it have occurred to say—though, since Christina of Sweden, and Catherine of Russia, few, indeed, among crowned heads would have had the wit to say it : that—

“The profession of Queen demands but three qualities : Beauty, bounty, and fecundity.”

Or that—

“Strictly speaking, a Prince requires nothing but eyes and ears ; he does not need a mouth, except to smile.”

It is piquant to hear from a Queen, first, that “A little contradiction animates conversation” ; and, secondly, that “This explains why courts are so dull.”

Rulers, on the other hand, are sometimes,

according to the same unimpeachable authority, exposed to the most unjust treatment.

“To every mortal is granted a tongue, and even a pen, to defend himself. Sovereigns are expected to be like God, who allows Himself to be slandered without replying.”

As one more example of what a Sovereign thinks concerning popular criticism of Sovereigns, the following acute observation may be cited :

“We often hear the phrase, ‘Put not your trust in Princes,’ quoted from the Bible ; but the rest of the verse, ‘For they also are men,’ is overlooked.”

Can it, by the way, be true, as Carmen Sylva assures us in her section on politics, that political women are—

“Hens who make themselves vultures”?

The true kingdom of Carmen Sylva is not, in any case, a political one ; a thought to which, some years ago, she gave expression in some beautiful stanzas to the Society of Felibrists, declining the invitation which this Association of Provençal Poets had addressed to her in a laudatory poem. Here is her poetical reply to the Felibrists, with its delicate flavour of six-

teenth-century French, the French of Ronsard and of Clément Marot.

I

Lors vous me faites, Chevaliers,
Bien beau domaine,
Jamais n'y pourrai m'ennuyer,
Ni, dans un soupir, regretter
Mon sort de Reine !

II

De jolies fleurs me couronnez,
De liens d'étoiles ;
De fils de vierge m'entourez ;
Mon preux, au soleil dérobez
Traîne royale.

III

Mon col a d'arc-en-ciel un jet
De fleurs tremblantes ;
Pour serviteurs, chardonnerets ;
J'ai pour pages les feux-follets,
Lueurs dansantes !

IV

De hautes âmes est ma cour
Bien composée !
De chansons, pour dames d'atour,
De nobles, preux, de troubadours,
Suis entourée.

V

De claires pensées est mon char,
 Et sous la voûte
 Du ciel, le mien domaine est l'art,
 Le beau, le devoir ; et je pars
 Et chante en route !

VI

Mais lorsque dans vos près, vos toits,
 Mon regard plonge,
 Je ressens soudain un effroi ;
 Mon âme a voyagé sans moi
 Comme en un songe !

VII

Mon royaume est trop grand, trop beau ;
 Dans la nature
 Perdue, je ne suis qu'un oiseau
 Caché ; mon faible chant ne vaut
 Qu'un doux murmure.

Ten years ago an Assembly of Welsh Bards was fortunate enough to secure Carmen Sylva's personal presence, day after day, at the Eistedfodd of Bangor, where she recited a charming poem composed for the occasion in the English language. Had she received but a few months' notice she would probably have composed it in

Welsh. The highest Bardic honours were, as a matter of course, offered to the inspired Queen and duly accepted.

To return to the "Thoughts." One of their greatest merits is their originality. There are few of them indeed which, so far as I know, are not absolutely new ; and even those which are not quite new have been renovated by new expression. Something very like—

"Do not marry a woman whose mouth drops at the corners : even were the mouth a cherry you would find the fruit bitter," had already been said by a Persian poet.

"Do not complain of suffering : it teaches you to succour others," was, ages ago, one of the "Thoughts of a Queen" : Queen Dido, when she succoured the shipwrecked Æneas.

Here, again, is an interesting correspondence of thought between Carmen Sylva and our own Keats :—

"Suffering is our most faithful friend. It always returns ; often it changes its garb, and even its countenance ; but we soon recognize it by its cordial and intimate embrace," says Carmen Sylva. Keats writes in "Endymion" :—

“Pleasure is oft a visitant : but pain
Clings cruelly to us like the gnawing sloth
On the deer’s tender haunches : late and loth
It is scared away by slow returning pleasure.”

Not less remarkable than their striking originality is the endless variety of the “Thoughts”; and there are numbers of them which, once read, can never be forgotten. These, for instance, which I quote at random :—

“Man tosses like a bull or crushes like a bear ; woman gnaws like a mouse or squeezes like a serpent.”

“Men study women as they study the barometer ; but they do not understand until the day afterwards.”

“Forgiveness is almost indifference ; who really loves does not forgive.”

“The song of the nightingale and the wailing of the cat are two methods of expressing the same feeling ; but these creatures do not understand one another.”

“White hair is the foam which covers the sea after a tempest.”

“The kindness of youth is angelic ; the kindness of age is divine.”

"The faults of your husband or your wife are insupportable only so long as you insist on correcting them. You should put up with them as you do with the smell of your dog, because you like him."

"A model housewife is always in despair. One could often wish the house less orderly and more peaceful."

"A shallow man never says . 'I am a fool.' His natural timidity makes him fear he may be right."

"You can only be witty when those around you are witty too. The cock crows in vain to the ducks. They do not understand him."

"Patience is not passive. On the contrary, it is active. It is concentrated strength."

"Duty only knits her brow when you fly from her. Follow her, and she smiles."

"Sleep is a generous robber: it gives in strength what it takes in time."

"A secret is like a hole in your coat. The more you try to hide it, the more you make it appear."

"If the unhappy martyrs had only known how trifling a thing it is to change one's

opinions, they would never have gone to the stake."

"A great number of wounds make you a hero in the eyes of the world and an invalid in your own."

"Piety is the nostalgia of a lost Paradise."

But I have already quoted too much, since all that I have been quoting is close at hand. I am warned, moreover, of a danger which, though in the present case it can have no existence for me, tells me all the same to desist; for, in the words of Carmen Sylva—"By dint of writing much on the works of others, people end by fancying themselves superior to them."

Owing to the difficulty of translating French into English I have been obliged to leave aside some few of the "Pensées"; and I strongly advise everyone to read all of them in the original French. How, I should like to know, is the word "femme" to be dealt with by an English translator, so as to bring out its double meaning of woman in general and of wife in particular?¹ Again, there is no English equivalent for "esprit" in its wide sense; just as there

¹ "La femme du monde est difficilement la femme de son mari."—*Les Pensées d'une Reine*.

is no French equivalent for "mind"; though there is, of course, for "mental."

Finally, I may say with confidence that, though the author of "*Les Pensées d'une Reine*" might have found for her ingenious and beautiful "Thoughts" a better translator than myself, she could not have met with a more careful one.

H. S. E.

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MAN

B



GOLDEN THOUGHTS

OF

CARMEN SYLVA

MAN



THE human head is a lucky-bag containing good spirits and bad ; served and defended by the eyes and ears, betrayed by the mouth.



Study the human body ; the soul is not far off.



Man is an enigma from his birth until his death. One thinks to understand him by tearing him open. A child breaks its toy to see what there is inside.



The honour of a man bears armour and a club ; the honour of a woman is a thing of wafts and perfumes.

The animals can be free in their element. Is our slavery due to our being so seldom in ours ?



It is not sufficient to observe men ; it is necessary to feel them in their heart.



Every man bears within him a Prometheus : creator, rebel, and martyr.



Man is a violin. It is not until his last string has snapped that he becomes a piece of wood.



Women are bad through the fault of men ; men through the fault of women.



Some persons have the horns of a bull to defend themselves with ; others the horns of a snail.



One must possess a very thorough knowledge of men before having the courage to be solely and simply oneself.



If we are created in the image of God, we also must be creators.

An assembly of men is a collection of æolian bells, whose notes are harmonious or discordant just as the wind blows.



For the bull-like nature, fatigue is an enjoyment ; for the artistic, it can only be a harsh discord.



When a man loves his children with an excess of passion, be sure that he is not happy.

WOMAN

WOMAN

A wife has to love you, suffer in childbirth, share your cares, direct your household, bring up your family, and be pretty and amiable into the bargain. What were you saying just now about her weakness?



In savage countries woman is a beast of burden ; in Turkey a toy ; in Europe a little of both.



Perhaps the great sensibility of women proceeds from the magnetism in their system. They are living compass-needles, always tending towards their pole ; but the deviations are frequent.



Your wife has brought dishonour into your family. Perhaps when you married her you were the first to dishonour her.



The abandoned woman sees in the honest woman a mirror which serves to reflect her own wrinkles. In her rage she would like to break it.



Woman is a chameleon of sensitiveness.



A woman will often utter a daring opinion ; but she recoils in terror if she is taken at her word !



Coquetry is not always an allurements : it is sometimes a shield.



A nightingale shrieking like a peacock ; such is a woman in a passion.



Do not marry a woman whose mouth droops at the corners. Even were the mouth a cherry, you would find the fruit bitter.



Do not marry a drone ; he would always find the house ill kept and his wife wearisome.



In science, women are so accustomed to be looked down upon, that they mistrust the scientific man who listens to them with respect.



“Serves her right!” often means: “She would have been so happy with me!”



A woman is stoned for an action which a perfect gentleman may commit with impunity.



Women are inclined to judge by a single example, which they generalize; that is what renders them so often passionate.



What a painful sight to see the child serving as refuge and protection to the mother.



We find women unjust because they are impressionable; but impressions are often juster than judgments. It is the story of the judge and the jury.



An unhappy woman is a flower exposed to the north wind: she remains long in the bud, and when she should be blossoming, fades.

In correcting the faults of their children, women keep above all in view those of their husband and *his* family.



A woman not understood is a woman who does not understand.



It is because men are deficient in artistic sentiment that women make themselves up ; if they understood the picturesque, pearl-powder itself would disappear.



Man tosses like a bull, or crushes like a bear ; woman nibbles like a mouse, or squeezes like a serpent.



Men study a woman as they study the barometer ; but they do not understand till the day afterwards.



Dress is not a matter of indifference. It makes you an animated object of art, provided you be the ornament of your ornaments.



Women in labour and artists suffer mortal pangs. It costs us dear when we meddle with creation !



It is from selfishness that men have made the severest laws for woman ; without suspecting that they have thereby raised her above themselves.



A woman's virtue ought, indeed, to be great ; since it has often to suffice for two.



A woman of true breeding has the same manners in her dressing-room as in her drawing-room, and the same politeness for her servants as for her guests.



There are women majestically pure like the swan. Touch them : you will see them erect their feathers for one moment, and then turn silently away, to take refuge amid the waves.



LOVE

LOVE

Love-children are generally handsome and intelligent. What a criticism on our model families !



The sun is the flower's first lover. The sun of some young girls is a burned-out, flickering old lamp. How can they be expected to bloom?



An unhappy love is for a man a pretext for pleasure without love.



Forgiveness is almost indifference ; who really loves does not forgive.



You hate the unhappy woman you would have liked to console.



Love is a squirrel, at once venturesome and timid.



A man in love is like the ostrich ; he thinks he is not seen because he does not see.



Maternal love is an instinct ; but there are instincts which breathe the divine.



A woman does not become a mother ; she is a mother from her birth. A numerous family satisfies her vocation, but does not create it.



A household without children is a bell without a clapper. The latent sound would be beautiful enough were there something to awaken it.



Jealousy in a lover is a homage ; in a husband an insult.



The song of the nightingale and the wailing of the cat are two modes of expressing the same feeling ; but these creatures do not understand one another.



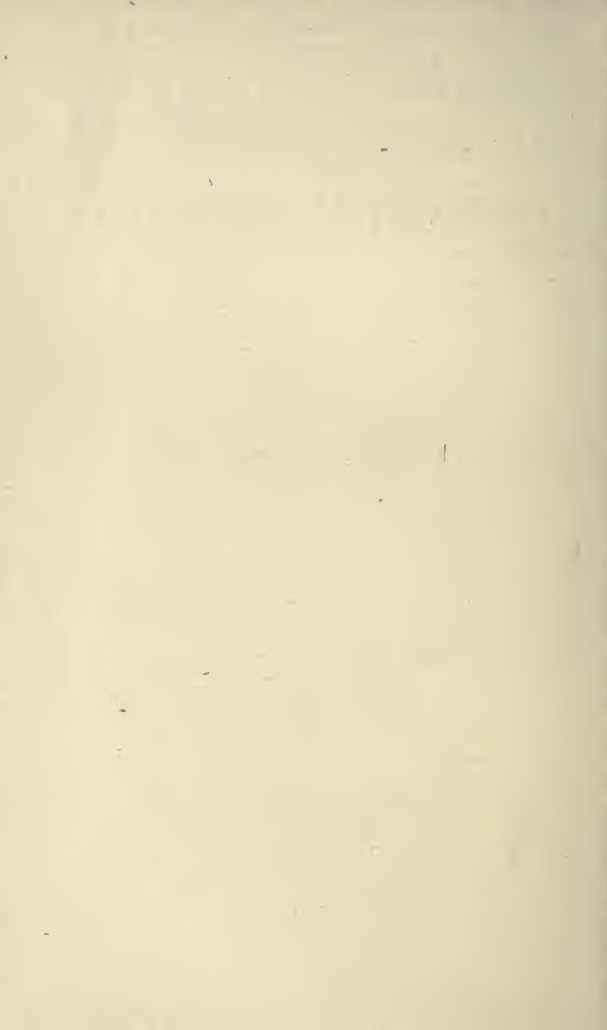
Between husband and wife a shadow of courtship should always subsist.



With real humility one could not be jealous. Any diminution in affection would be attributed to one's own fault.



Indifference is a solitary flower growing on a marsh.



FRIENDSHIP

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship based solely upon gratitude is like a photograph ; with time it fades.



Consolations often fall upon the heart like drops of water upon boiling butter. They make it splutter and spurt.



To struggle against friends true courage is required. It is like putting out your own fire to remain in the cold.



Friendship diminishes when there is too much happiness on one side and too much misery on the other.



To practise a deception is almost to commit a crime. The flow of kindness thus driven back is withdrawn from others whom it might have benefited.

HAPPINESS

HAPPINESS

There is but one happiness :

Duty.

There is but one consolation :

Work.

There is but one delight :

The beautiful.



Happiness at a distance appears so great as to touch the sky. When it enters our door it so dwindles that very often we no longer recognize it.



Hope is fatigue ending in deception.



Happiness is like the echo : it answers but does not come.



As soon as your happiness appears illusory, friends are in a frenzy to destroy it.



Is the calm which you have acquired a proof of growing strength or of increasing weakness?



Some hundred coloured and perfumed leaves are required to form a rose ; and many joys to constitute happiness.



Seek consolation only in immortal things ; in nature, and in thought.



The power of doing a good action is happiness enough.

MISFORTUNE

MISFORTUNE

Does misery spring from imprudence ; or are we imprudent because we are predestined to misery ?



Each deception detaches you from earth, from men, and above all from yourself ; these are so many stages in a mortal malady.



In your life's shipwreck you might have saved yourself but that you were ashamed to seize your plank of safety, and so went to the bottom.



Misfortune may make us proud ; suffering makes us humble.



We are always the martyrs of our own faults.



Great misfortune lends greatness even to an insignificant person.



Do not be proud of having borne your misfortune. Could you have done otherwise?



There is a sort of instantaneous brotherhood between victims of misfortune. When you have been long in mourning you feel attracted by every black coat you meet.



You are vexed when time separates you from a cruel loss. It deprives you of what remained to you : the right of weeping.



The respect people show you in your misfortune diminishes long before you have begun to outlive it ; and you feel irritated at being treated as before.



One must be indeed unhappy to attempt suicide a second time.



Misfortune is like the hydra of Lerna ; but nothing is gained by playing Hercules.

SUFFERING

SUFFERING

Suffering is our most faithful friend. It always returns. Often it changes its garb and even its countenance ; but we soon recognize it by its cordial and intimate embrace.



Suffering is a heavy plough, driven by a hand of iron. The more ungrateful and rebellious the soil the more it tears ; the richer and softer the soil the deeper it delves.



Do not complain of suffering ; it teaches you to succour others.



When you are young, grief is a tempest which prostrates you ; at mature age it is simply a north wind which adds a wrinkle to your brow, and one more white hair to your head.



Suffering is sensitive and clairvoyant. Happiness has firmer nerves but not so true an eye.



It is nearly always the body which makes us seek support for the soul.



A beast in pain seeks solitude. Man alone makes a parade of his misery.



When we have a sorrow which we do not wish to mention, we speak of others which we formerly concealed.



Grief is a hot spring; the more it is repressed the more it spouts.



There are persons who nurse their grief to such a point that they grow fat on it.



There are tears which burn and scarify. There are others which beautify and adorn. There are others again which menace and terrify.



Anguish is less tolerable than pain ; anguish sharpens the senses, pain blunts them.



Pain revenges itself on our courage by increasing.



When you have long been parted from joy you no longer expect it ; and, should it knock at your door, you open with alarm, lest it should prove to be grief in disguise.



Those who maintain that grief, when it is made the subject of song, is nearly cured, either are not poets or have not suffered. It is like saying that the man who cries out under torture, or under an operation, does not suffer.



When you suffer much you see the world at a great distance, as though it lay in an immense desert. Even the voices seem to come from afar.



Under intense grief you shut yourself up like an oyster. To force you to open your heart would be to kill you.



A state of dejection is like a sponge ; it increases with tears.



The pity of those who have never suffered comes to you like an icy breeze which cools the heat of the sun. The sympathy of those who have suffered is like the sirocco, warm even in winter ; but it only relaxes you.



A struggle against the external world doubles the resources of our organism ; a struggle against ourselves destroys them.



Melancholy, when it is not a physical infirmity, is a sort of convalescence, during which we always fancy ourselves worse than during the malady itself

LIFE

LIFE

Life is an art in which one too often remains a mere amateur. Without spilling the heart's blood it is impossible to become a master.



Affection is a coaxing child which attaches you to life in spite of yourself.



White hair is the foam which covers the sea after the tempest.



Love, hatred, jealousy, fate, are blind ; even justice has her eyes bandaged. One must quit life, then, in order to get a view of it.



If when you are wasting your time you could give some of it to those who would know how to employ it, how many beggars would become rich !



Great people love animals because they feel sure that their affection is disinterested ; and they deceive themselves !



It is gold which weights our wings and holds us down to earth. Without it we should perhaps reach the heavens.



Young women sometimes traverse a marsh with so light a step that the mud hardly clings to their heels. It is only when they have arrived on solid ground that they feel themselves poisoned by the putrid miasmas lingering about them.



The faults of your husband or your wife are insupportable only so long as you insist on correcting them. Put up with them as you do with the smell of your dog, because you like him.



You can never be tired of life ; you are only tired of yourself.



At midnight the streets are full of revellers ;
at early morning, of toilers. Perhaps, between
midnight and morning, happiness has passed.



Every one of our actions is rewarded or
punished, only we do not admit it.



It is better to confess to a physician than to
a priest. You tell the priest that you detest
mankind : he replies that you are not a Chris-
tian. The physician gives you a dose of rhubarb,
and thereupon you love your neighbour. You
tell the priest that you are tired of life : he
replies that suicide is a crime. The physician
gives you a stimulant, and thereupon you find
life supportable.



After death the body dissolves into atoms ;
why should the soul remain one? Perhaps it
also forms a thousand essences which spread
through space.



In youth, one is a mediæval castle, with
hidden nooks, secret chambers, mysterious
galleries, trenches, and ramparts. One becomes

afterwards a modern mansion, rich, morocco-leathered, elegant, stylish, and only open to the select ; and ultimately a great hall, open to the whole world, a market, a museum, or a cathedral.



Fasting makes a devotee ; good cheer a diplomatist.



What makes you blush in youth makes you weep at middle age and laugh when you are old. Those who begin by laughing have nothing left in the end but religion or a blank.



The kindness of youth is angelic ; the kindness of age is divine.



There is a repulsive goodness as well as an attractive wickedness.



The rock becomes more and more angular, the pebble more and more round.



An excellent housewife is always in despair. One could often wish the house less in order and more at peace.



It is not until you have invoked death a hundred times that you understand the charm of life ; and then perhaps it is on the point of leaving you.



You cannot teach people to speak your language unless you speak theirs.



The small succumb to the great by a law of nature ; and the great are ungenerous by a law of humanity.



The fire boils the kettle ; but the kettle extinguishes the fire. Do not expend your warmth upon the ungrateful ; they would extinguish you.



Experience is an aged woman whom we respect without inquiring too closely into her past.



Knowledge of the world and of the sea is gained in tempests ; but in the eyes of the old mariner may be seen the reflection of the death he has so often braved.



One must have heart to enjoy a person's qualities ; and mind to endure his defects.



Try to be a precious stone set by the hand of an artist.



People forgive us neither our talents, nor our successes, nor our friends, nor our marriage, nor our fortune ; it is only our death which they forgive, and even then——



Your heel of Achilles is much more readily detected by those beneath you than by those on your own level.



There are parents who revenge themselves on their children for the bad education they have given them.



What you find agreeable in one person is insupportable in another. Which is it that blinds you : sympathy or antipathy ?



When a person inspires you with antipathy you become unfaithful to your convictions, solely in order to contradict him.



For a number of years you are afraid to trust to your own observation because it differs from that of others.

NATURE

E



NATURE

People refuse to believe what is opposed to the laws of nature ; but do they understand the laws of nature ?



The sun never sees the world otherwise than full of heat and light. First be the sun ; and then see how the world looks.



Many a little flower is crushed beneath the foot of the wayfarer. Nature, rich and inexhaustible, replaces them with usury. Imitate nature.



The St. Bernard dog is noble and generous ; the bulldog voracious and impetuous ; the greyhound capricious and swift. Nature has made them thus, and has stamped each with a character so distinct that it is impossible to mistake it.



The St. Bernard men give themselves the airs of bulldogs ; the bulldogs wish to be greyhounds ; and so on. Hence confusion and misconception.

THE MIND

THE MIND

Great thinkers and lofty mountains raise you in your own eyes.



When two women of intelligence can extract nothing from a man, be sure there is nothing in him.



A shallow man never says : "I am a fool." His natural timidity makes him fear he may be right.



When, in conversing with anyone, you see that he is keeping something back, it seems as though you were feeling for his hands across a wall.



Conversation becomes painful when replies are made, not to words uttered, but to words suppressed.



Imagination is a gay companion that frolics along the road and tells us tales. Reality is an old woman who talks of nothing but herself, and, always fatigued, wants to be carried.



Comparisons spoil impressions, as resemblances spoil faces.



You can only be witty when those around you are witty too. The cock crows in vain to the ducks ; they do not understand him.



We fear originality as a coat which is too new, and do our utmost to be like the rest of the world.



By dint of writing much on the works of others, people end by fancying themselves superior to them. But for the conviction that Jesus is God, preachers would find Him of mediocre intelligence.



By too much talk the gold of our thoughts is so turned into small change that we appear poor.



At a tragic moment or in a difficult situation one says stupid things. The dog barks when he is afraid.



In order to measure the mind we measure the skull. This is like eating the skin of the grape to find the bouquet of the wine.



To hear ridicule cast on a person you love is like having a flower in your garden nipped with frost.



The pen gives more consolation than religion and more torture than the Inquisition.



Thinkers, without suspecting it, govern the world ; and men in power, also without suspecting it, are governed by the world.



It needs as many reflections to produce a thought as it does generations to produce a thinker.

VIRTUE

VIRTUE

Do not feel yourself degraded by having known temptation. Socrates was doubly great for having conquered himself.



Patience is not passive. On the contrary, it is active ; it is concentrated strength.



Infinite delicacy is needed to respond to a confession without envenoming the sore.



A quiet conscience delights in solitude ; a guilty soul finds it a dungeon.



Purity is like the opal ; it seems insignificant to those who do not perceive its fires.



If the joys of this world are not pure, it is because we ourselves are not.



Duty knits her brow only when you fly from her. Follow her, and she smiles.



How patient we should be with others if we regarded their faults as madness.



Folly presses into the first rank in order to be seen ; intelligence retires to the last, in order to see.



We fight against defects which cause suffering to ourselves, and cherish those which cause suffering only to others.



It is, above all, our bad habits which are disagreeable ; while our defects at times seem agreeable.



Be a Puritan yourself, but do not insist on Puritanism in others.

ART

ART

It is more essential for the poet to be true in sentiment than in invention.



The artist is in love with a blank canvas, an empty sheet of paper, a piece of rough marble. As soon as his hand has rendered them immortal, he regards them with horror ; and woe to him if he remains in love with them.



Bad poets make of language what bad priests make of religion : a narrow prison.



People call ugliness truth, just as they call coarseness candour.



A bad novel awakens the senses, a good novel the conscience.

PRIDE

PRIDE

What happiness to imagine one has thought, because one has put forth either a proverb or commonplace !



You are proud of your ancestors because of their number. Your grandchildren, educated to these sentiments, will regard you only as a unit in a series.



Pride, united to strength, ennobles : united to weakness, it degrades.



We are prouder of the advantages we have gained than of our own talents ; and, nevertheless, these advantages only place us on the level of many others. Talent alone raises us.



If you are to be great, your person must disappear behind your work.

POLITICS

POLITICS

We hasten to implant in new countries the civilization of old ones. This is like putting false teeth in the place of sound ones.



In certain situations one has so often to hold one's tongue that it at last becomes paralysed and can stammer out nothing but old worn-out phrases.



To every mortal is granted a tongue and even a pen to defend himself. Sovereigns alone are expected to be like God, who allows Himself to be slandered without replying.



A little contradiction animates conversation. This explains why courts are so dull.



To be the friend of a sovereign you must be without passion, without ambition, without ego-

tism, clear-sighted and far-sighted ; in short, not a man.



One often hears the phrase, "Put not your trust in princes !" quoted from the Bible ; but the rest of the verse, "for they also are men," is overlooked.



Women who meddle with politics are hens who make themselves vultures.



Politics resemble a desert : a blast of wind forms an enormous mountain, while mirages are frequent and dangerous.



Strictly speaking, a prince requires nothing but eyes and ears ; he does not need a mouth, except to smile.



The profession of queen demands but three qualities : beauty, bounty, and fecundity.



The multitude is like the sea : it either bears you up or swallows you, according to the wind.

MISCELLANEOUS

MISCELLANEOUS

Not to follow your advice is nothing. But to follow only half of it is terrible. Your intentions are caricatured.



At a wedding men laugh and women cry.



A blade of grass, after you have trodden on it, stands up again as fresh as ever. Unfortunately, you are followed by others who make a path, and the grass disappears.



Deprive a butterfly of its beautiful, radiant wings, and nothing remains but a vile reptile.



A secret is like a hole in your coat. The more you try to hide it, the more you let it appear.



Sleep is a generous robber : it gives in strength what it takes in time.



The atmosphere of certain new-comers penetrates at once an entire circle and changes it, as a new colour changes those with which it is mixed.



Flatterers always begin by saying that they cannot flatter.



Comets and great men leave behind them a train of light in which crowds of atoms are agitated.



If the unhappy martyrs had only known how trifling a thing it is to change one's opinions there would have been no burning alive.



Prudery is a perfume which disguises a vitiated atmosphere.



A great number of wounds make you a hero in the eyes of the world and a cripple in your own.



To strengthen an affirmation men call God to witness, knowing that God will not contradict them.



There would have been no martyrs had there been no mob.



In putting forward an opinion, one sometimes dashes against an opponent, like a wave against a rock ; sometimes one retires and breaks into foam.



You become sullen when you foresee a request which it would be unpleasant to refuse. It is like turning against the wind with your umbrella, to prevent its being blown inside out.



At night everything burns—stars, thoughts, and tears.



Many men criticize merely not to seem ignorant. They do not know that indulgence is a mark of the highest culture.



Piety is the nostalgia of a lost Paradise.



One should be either very pious or very philosophical, saying, "Lord, Thy will be done"; or, "Nature, I accept thy laws, even though they crush me."



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